

# Extreme heat

## Supporting people by telephone

### Heat health information for service providers

Before and during extreme heat, it is important to remind people of the risks posed to human health and what can be done to reduce these risks. Extreme heat can affect anybody, including the young and healthy, but there are certain population groups more at risk than others.

Those most at risk during extreme heat are:

- people **over 65 years old**, especially those living alone
- people who have a **medical condition** such as diabetes, kidney disease or mental illness
- people **taking medications** that may affect the way the body reacts to heat such as:
  - allergy medicines (antihistamines)
  - blood pressure and heart medicines (beta-blockers)
  - seizure medicines (anticonvulsants)
  - water pills (diuretics)
  - antidepressants or antipsychotics

- people with **problematic alcohol** or other drug use
- people with **a disability** who may not be able to identify or communicate their discomfort or thirst
- people who have trouble moving around (such as those who are **bed-bound** or in **wheelchairs**)
- people who are **overweight or obese**
- **pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, babies and young children**
- people who work or are physically **active outdoors**.

The Department of Health & Human Services heat health resources can be distributed to callers or clients in the days prior to extreme heat. These resources include a brochure, information sheet and poster, which are also available in other languages.

To stay healthy in the heat, keep cool and hydrated.



# Telephone script template for service providers

This telephone script template has been prepared for use by service providers who are talking to people who may be at increased risk of heat-related illness during extreme heat. The purpose of this script during or prior to extreme heat is to remind people to: **✓ Keep cool. ✓ Drink plenty of water. ✓ Seek medical advice if they feel unwell.**

You may adapt this script for your service, for example, by adding contact details for local support services.

Key message	Lead question/statement
<b>Keep cool</b>	<b>Are you in a cool place?</b>
<b>Yes.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you stay indoors and close your curtains and blinds to block out the sun?</li><li>• Can you keep your air-conditioner on (if you have one), making sure it is set to cool?</li><li>• Can you wear light, loose-fitting clothes and remove unnecessary clothing?</li><li>• Can you limit physical activity and avoid doing anything strenuous such as gardening?</li></ul>	<b>No.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you spend as much time as possible in cool or air-conditioned buildings, such as shopping centres?</li><li>• Can you keep your air-conditioner on (if you have one), making sure it is set to cool?</li><li>• Can you stay indoors and close your curtains and blinds to block out the sun?</li><li>• Can you wear light, loose-fitting clothes and take off any unnecessary clothing?</li><li>• Can you keep yourself cool by using wet towels, putting your feet in cool water or taking cool (not cold) showers?</li><li>• Can you limit physical activity and avoid doing anything strenuous such as gardening?</li></ul>
<b>Yes.</b> Great! If you feel unwell, seek medical advice.	<b>No.</b> Explore any barriers (lives alone, unwell, poor mobility/disabled, obligations to go outdoors) and refer to 'Get assistance' section below.
<b>Keep hydrated</b>	<b>It is important to stay hydrated</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty (if your doctor normally limits your fluids, check how much to drink during hot weather).</li><li>• If you must go out, stay in the shade and take plenty of water with you.</li><li>• Eat smaller meals more often and eat cold meals such as salads.</li></ul>	
<b>Get assistance</b>	<b>Do you have someone who can help you with assistance at home? Can they help with errands and other appointments in hot weather?</b>
<b>Yes.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you make contact with them and ask for their assistance at home and with errands and appointments?</li><li>• Can you get them to arrange things you may need (towels, footbath, water, clothing, medication, food) before a hot day?</li></ul>	<b>No.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you plan or re-arrange errands and appointments so you can stay out of the heat?</li></ul>
<b>Yes.</b> Great!	<b>No.</b> Suggest these options for assistance, depending on barriers identified. <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. If you know your neighbour, ask for assistance.</li><li>2. Call the council to arrange for HACC services on hot days.</li><li>3. Cancel non-essential appointments if they can't be re-arranged.</li><li>4. Call a taxi to get you to an air-conditioned place.</li><li>5. Call an organisation that normally supports you (Lions, Rotary, RSL, etc.) to provide assistance.</li><li>6. Activate a personal alarm.</li></ol>
<b>Get medical help</b>	<b>If you feel unwell during the heat</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Please telephone your usual medical help or healthcare service.</li><li>• For 24-hour health advice contact NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.</li><li>• In an emergency please dial triple zero (000).</li></ul>	

**Note: If a caller expresses any concern for their welfare, implement your agency's standard referral or emergency protocols.**